



Connecticut River Joint Commissions

Wednesday, November 20, 2019

CRJC Offices, 10 Water St. Lebanon, NH

Executive Committee Meeting / 1:00–4:00 P.M.

MINUTES

Members Present: Steve Lembke, Tara Bamford, Lionel Chute, Alex Belenzs, Jennifer Griffin;

Staff: Pat Crocker

Guest: Emily Davis

President Lembke called the meeting to order at 1:07 p.m.

Approve July 15, 2019 EC Minutes – The minutes of July 15 were approved by motion of Griffin/Belenzs with two minor corrections: “Minutes of May EC Minutes” > “Minutes of May EC Meeting,” and in same section, Comm. Chute.

Jim McClammer and Chris Campany arrived.

Upon review of the minutes of July 15 Comm. Lembke agreed he will follow up on possible VT Community Foundation grant request for change.

Accept Sept 2019 Financials – The September 2019 financial report was reviewed and accepted by motion of Campany/Chute. Griffin will ask accountant MacEwan about the \$54 difference that Bamford noted between the adopted budget and the budget column on the financial report.

Follow-up September 2019 Joint Commissions Meeting – Comm. Lembke gave updates on the action items from the September 2019 Commission meeting. He reported that the new VT workplan had been submitted. Lembke asked McClammer if he could share his notes from the FERC meeting as agreed. Comm. McClammer said they were not available. Comm. Lembke wrote a letter for new LRS members with help from staff; it can be used as a template going forward.

Status of Contracts – Vermont Contract Received on 11 / 20 / 2019 – Comm. reported that the VT contract had been received and signed.

Item 5 was tabled until later in the meeting when Pat Crocker could be present.

Strategic Planning – NHCf Grant

Comm. Lembke gave an update on the NHCf grant for strategic planning help. He had spoken with NHCf contact person and explained the difficulty finding a consultant and conducting a full strategic planning process for \$5,000. Crocker filled out the form with the changes and the new deadline will be June 30, 2020. NHCf was agreeable to the change.

Item 7 was tabled until later in the meeting.

Claremont Savings Bank Grant – Comm. Belenz gave an update on the Claremont Savings Bank project. He has received interest in the economic gathering from RDCs and Chambers of Commerce. He feels the big event we had initially talked about when we hoped for USDA funding would require a lot of staff time and/or volunteer time, and it might be more realistic to just have the agencies come meet with the Commission for a discussion. Comm. Company mentioned he may be able to offer Comm. Belenz some help with this initiative after January 1. It was agreed that it would be good to have a deliverable such as a one pager on the key issues identified.

FERC Update – Comm. Griffin gave an update on the FERC relicensing. GRH is putting together a revised application with an anticipated filing date of the end of April. McClammer reported having discussions with CRC and CLF about issues related to the relicensing. It was agreed that everyone involved in related activities should be careful to make a distinction between their views and CRJC's written positions.

Comm. Chute brought up the growing issue of road salt and its relationship to harmful algal blooms. He also reported on graduate research that showed the Connecticut River harbors a toxin that is a byproduct of algae. Chute asked if there might be issues of common concern that CRJC and GRH could work on together, for example, does the increased salt cause corrosion on the hydro facilities. Griffin responded that she is not aware of that being an issue.

Comm. McClammer raised the issue of follow-up after permit reviews; he is not sure if the water treatment cells that NHDOT were supposed to include in the redesign of NH 12 along the river have been constructed.

Comm. Company reported that three RPC directors met with John Ragonese of GRH for an update on the relicensing. Company is concerned that there seems to be no communication between ANR and the Public Service Dept to discuss Vermont's policy on hydropower, e.g., how

it fits into the state's goal to increase renewables. It's not clear if there is a policy to guide balancing the various interests. It was also noted that some municipalities are concerned about the valuation of the facilities decreasing if the amount of power GRH can make is decreased as a result of the relicensing. Comm. McClammer noted that the proposed changes in federal rules would lessen the ability to look at uses and values vs water quality only.

On the topic of needing to look at the interrelationships among issues, Lembke brought up his conversation with Marie Caduto about funding and noted that bringing groups together is an important role as well as outreach such as press releases on our activities. Lembke put it as CRJC being "the bright light that sheds light on problems and solutions and shares information across the states."

Comm. Lembke reported that Tom Sexton, the regional director for rails to trails, is working on a Burlington - Boston bike route and identified a gap from Wells River to White River Junction. Sexton had asked about using the byway and Lembke explained that the byway is just a designation. He will invite Sexton to the December meeting to talk more about the project and what he is looking for. Belensz reported that there is a lot of work in NH that will help inform the project, including updates to the state's bike/ped plan, state rail plan, and state rail to trail plan. Campany reported that Vermont also did bike suitability maps. It was agreed that it would be helpful at the December meeting to have updates on both states' bike route maps, and that Sexton should also be advised to work with the TACs.

Approve: the planning process, facilitator, next steps, and timeline

By motion of Commissioners Campany/Griffin it was voted to hire Emily Davis to assist with the strategic planning process. There was discussion on the need to move the process forward and be expedient and efficient while giving all Commissioners an opportunity to be engaged in the process.

Comm. Lembke reported on a conversation with Andy Fiske, CRC EC, on his interest in partnering with CRJC on public education.

At this point Pat Crocker joined the meeting and took over the minutes from Tara Bamford.

Update on Strategic Planning –Steve Lembke and Emily Davis – General discussion and presentation – Discussion on the method of distributing the results of interviews and research at the first meeting which would be with the Executive Committee. This meeting would be open to other commissioners and local subcommittee members. The

stakeholder list would include the funding agencies.

Commissioner Bamford thought there were too many interviews and more time should be spent on facilitating discussions to develop consensus among Commissioners regarding our role and next steps.

Comm. Lembke noted that among the questions to be answered is the purpose and need for the Joint Commissions today versus what the CRJC is able to do now?

Comm. Chute believes the questions are currently forensic and he would like to see them looking forward regarding potential partnerships with CRJC including river-related organizations. The CRC is one of the organization relationships that CRJC would like to be healthy and functional. In a perfect world what would CRJC's role be? Where could CRC and CRJC work together: In conversation with Andy Fisk, public education would be one of the key activities on which the two organizations might collaborate.

One outcome of the research and interviews would be to better understand the current public perception of CRJC.

Comm. Company cited the statutory description of the CRVRC is "...to protect the resources of the Connecticut River Valley and guide its development and growth." That is the distinction between the CRC and the CRJC. The missions are different for the two organizations. He would love to capture that as the mission of the CRJC based on its statutory language. Guiding the development of resources of the river valley and to protect the river in the process of development.

Updated overview of plans of the river are needed, but without the financial resources CRJC cannot perform the functions that were envisioned at its creation. Learning what individual board members are interested in would be helpful in focusing on future activities. CRJC might start convening groups to engage on topics of mutual interest.

Comm. Company stated that CRJC should be working from the enabling legislation. These do not focus on water quality. Should the local river subcommittees engage with communities on both sides of the river on recreation and economic development? In a perfect world these are the concerns that the LACs should be discussing. For example, CRJC might convene a case study on bi-state bridge rehabilitation. But there is also a

role for the LACs on the particular local issues such as erosion and development encroachment.

Emily Davis stated she felt that the questions need to be developed further. She would prefer to have the ability to go beyond a structured script. The questions should be compass points, but not rigid scripts.

Commissioner Bamford said she would better define CRJC's role. Do people outside hold the same perception as Commissioners? Discussion of interview questions continued. Consistent metrics and data are important for quantitative analysis beyond only open-ended questions. Many people do not understand that CRJC is a statutory organization. Importance of questions on need and what CRJC could do that it is not doing now. If stakeholders can't answer about the CRJC purpose that's not a good sign. The ultimate goal is to determine whether the CRJC still serves a need and should continue to exist.

Scheduling interviews versus cold calling was discussed. Who will be considered as stake holders. Should Conservation Commissions be included. Including selectboards however offers an advantage in raising visibility of CRJC.

December 16 Agenda

- Update on the NHCF Grant
- FERC Relicensing – Status Report
- Follow up on Claremont Savings Bank Grant Project
- New/Other Business – Alex Gilman Hydro Dam to observe as NCC staff.
- Rails to Trails Discussion
- Transportation Climate Initiative
- Strategic Planning
- Bio-mass Heating – To Hold multiple meetings on topics.
- Road salt causing a vicious cycle with diminishing water quality and using algal blooms. Low quality wood products being tested as a substitute for salt.
- Upcoming Meetings and Conferences

Adjourn: Chute moved and Commissioner Griffin seconded a motion to adjourn. Vote: Unanimous.

Adopted: February 24, 2020